

DATE: November 20, 2008

SUBJECT

Notice of Preparation—Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Issuance of Incidental Take Permits and Entry into a Master Streambed Alteration Agreement for Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E's) Operations and Maintenance Activities in the North Coast, Central Coast, Sacramento Valley, and Sierra regions (Multiple Region), California.

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) plan to prepare a joint EIS/EIR to evaluate the potential impacts of and alternatives to the proposed habitat conservation plan and issuance of incidental take permits pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), and Section 2081(b) of the California Fish and Game Code; and entry into a Master Streambed Alteration Agreement by DFG with PG&E.

PG&E is required by law to provide natural gas and electrical service, under the jurisdiction of the California Public Utilities Commission. An investor-owned company, PG&E serves more than 4.8 million electricity customers and 4 million natural gas customers throughout California in response to this mandate. Activities necessary to operate, maintain, upgrade, and extend PG&E's electricity and natural gas infrastructure in the Multiple Region Plan Area have the potential to result in take of species listed under the federal and/or California Endangered Species Acts. Consistent with the requirements of Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Section 2081(b) of the California Fish and Game Code, PG&E is proposing a habitat conservation plan (HCP) including measures to avoid, minimize, and compensate for take (mitigation measures), and seeks to obtain permits authorizing incidental take of HCP-covered species during necessary operation, maintenance, and construction activities.

PG&E BAY AREA OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

Covered Area

The Plan area includes the network of PG&E facilities in 36 counties, including 18 counties within the Sacramento Valley region, 20 counties within the Sierra region (of which 12 overlap with Sacramento Valley), 6 counties within the Central Coast region, and 4 counties within the North Coast region. The Sacramento Valley region includes the following counties: Tuolumne; Calaveras; Amador; Sacramento; Yolo; Sutter; Butte; Glenn; Yuba; El Dorado; Placer; Nevada; Sierra; Plumas; Colusa; Tehama; Trinity; and Shasta. The counties within the Sierra region include: Modoc; Siskiyou; Lassen; Shasta; Tehama; Butte; Plumas; Sierra; Nevada; Placer; Yuba; El Dorado; Amador, Calaveras; Alpine, Tuolumne; Mariposa; Madera; Fresno; and Tulare. The Central Coast region consists of the following counties: Santa Cruz; San Benito; Monterey; San Luis Obispo; Santa Barbara; and Kern. The North Coast region consists of the following counties: Humboldt; Trinity; Mendocino; and Lake. The total area proposed for coverage includes

approximately 550,000 acres and includes the right-of-way surrounding gas and electric transmission and distribution facilities, the lands owned by PG&E and/or subject to PG&E easements for these facilities, private access routes associated with PG&E's activities, future minor new construction areas, and mitigation areas for impacts resulting from PG&E's activities..

Species Proposed for Coverage

Currently, 109 species are proposed for HCP coverage. Table 1 lists wildlife species and their current status; Table 2 lists plant species and their current status. Species may be added or deleted during the course of HCP development, based on further analysis, new information, agency consultation, and/or public comment.

Activities Proposed for Coverage

Activities that may be covered under the HCP include a variety of tasks associated with the operation and maintenance (O&M), including minor new construction of PG&E's gas and electric transmission and distribution system as mandated for public safety by the California Public Utilities Commission, and the U.S. Department of Transportation. More specifically, these activities may include: gas pipeline protection, recoating, repair and replacement; electric line protection, repair, reconductoring, and replacement; electric pole repair/replacement; vegetation management to maintain clearances around facilities; and minor construction for new gas and electric extensions. The HCP would not cover operation, maintenance, or construction of power generation facilities.

Avoidance and Mitigation

The HCP proposes measures to mitigate impacts on covered species as a result of O&M activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/REPORT

The Service and DFG will prepare a joint EIS/EIR in compliance with NEPA and CEQA. The Service will be responsible for the scope and content of the document for NEPA purposes, and DFG will be responsible for the scope and content of the document for CEQA purposes.

DFG has full discretionary authority over the issuance of Section 2081 incidental take permits (ITP) and Master Streambed Alteration Agreements (MSAA); however, DFG must analyze the potential impacts of issuing an ITP, and entering into a MSAA, to fully comply with CEQA. After consulting with PG&E and reviewing the proposed HCP, DFG will consider whether or not to issue a 2081 incidental take permit or enter into a Master Streambed Alteration Agreement. In order to fully analyze the potential environmental outcomes, the EIS/EIR will analyze several alternative conservation strategies for the HCP. Activities directly enabled by the proposed project, and analyzed in the EIS/EIR, will include PG&E's ongoing O&M program in the Multiple Region Plan Area along with any additional activities entailed by new environmental commitments and mitigation measures required under the HCP, HCP implementation agreement, ITP, and MSAA.

The EIS/EIR will analyze a reasonable range of “action” alternatives to the proposed HCP, under all of which some form of HCP and regional, program-wide incidental take permits are assumed. Action alternatives may vary by the level of conservation, permit area, covered species, or a combination of these factors. The EIS/EIR will also analyze the No Project Alternative. Under the No Project Alternative, PG&E would continue to operate and maintain its natural gas and electricity facilities according to the current scenario. No regional, program-wide HCP would be developed for the Multiple Region Plan Area O&M program, nor would PG&E seek an “umbrella” Section 2081 permit or Master Streambed Alteration Agreement. Instead, PG&E would continue to address threatened and endangered species on a case-by-case basis.

The EIS/EIR will identify significant impacts of the proposed project and alternatives related to land use and planning; agricultural resources; biological resources; aesthetics; geology and soils; water resources; cultural resources; paleontological resources; transportation and circulation; noise and vibration; air quality, public health/ environmental hazards; recreation; environmental justice; and socioeconomics. Where feasible, the EIS/EIR will identify mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to a level below significance.

PUBLIC MEETING

One public meeting and one public web conference have been scheduled to provide an overview of the proposed action and obtain feedback. The public meeting will be held on the following date and time at the following location:

Thursday, December 4, 2008, at the Evelyn Moore Community Center, 1402 Dickson Street, Sacramento, CA, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

A web conference is scheduled for the same date as the public meeting, from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Please follow the instructions below to participate:

In order to hear the audio for the conference, you must dial the number listed below and reference the listed passcode for the operator or automated response system

Audio Dial-in Number: 877-741-4242

Passcode: 1495039

****Dial *0 for Technical Assistance****

Step One –Test Browser

Please test your browser for compatibility at the following URL prior to the event date:
https://www112.livemeeting.com/cc/test2007/join?id=LiveMeeting2007Test&role=attend&cn=user&pw=&recording_agreement=accepted&placewareLicenseCookie=true

Please note that this is only the browser check link and not the link to the actual event. Once you have successfully joined the test meeting, you may exit.

Step Two – Join Conference 10 Minutes Prior to Event Start

Follow THIS link to join the meeting no more than 10 minutes prior to start time:

<https://www.livemeeting.com/cc/vcc/join?id=w1495039&role=attend&pw=A149503>

Troubleshooting

If you have problems entering the conference using the above link, please type in the meeting URL below and enter the Meeting ID and Entry Code when prompted:

Meeting URL: <https://www119.livemeeting.com/cc/vcc/join>

Enter your Meeting ID and Entry Code when prompted

Meeting ID: w1495039

Entry Code: A149503

SUBMITTING COMMENTS

DFG invites written comments from interested parties to ensure that the full range of issues related to the proposed project are identified and analyzed. Information, written comments, and questions related to the preparation of the EIS/EIR should be received on or before December 31, 2008. Written comments should be directed to the contact below. All comments received, including commentors' names and addresses, will become part of the official administrative record and may be made available to the public.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott Flint

Program Manager, Environmental Review and Permitting

Energy Project Permitting Coordinator

California Department of Fish and Game

1416 9th Street – Suite 1280

Sacramento, CA 95814

Telephone: (916) 653-9719

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in a public meeting should contact Scott Flint at (916) 653-9719 as soon as possible. In order to allow sufficient time to process requests, please call no later than 1 week before the public meeting. Information regarding this proposed project is available in alternative formats upon request.

Table 1. Wildlife Species Proposed for HCP Coverage

Species	Status ¹	
	Federal	State
Invertebrates		
Conservancy fairy shrimp <i>Branchinecta conservatio</i>	E	–
Vernal pool fairy shrimp <i>Branchinecta lynchi</i>	T	–
Ohlone tiger beetle <i>Cicindela ohlone</i>	E	–
Valley elderberry longhorn beetle <i>Desmocerus californicus dimorphus</i>	T	–
Smith’s blue butterfly <i>Euphilotes enoptes smithi</i>	E	–
Kern primrose sphinx moth <i>Euproserpinus euterpe</i>	T	–
Morro shoulderband snail <i>Helminthoglypta walkeriana</i>	E	–
Vernal pool tadpole shrimp <i>Lepidurus packardii</i>	E	–
Lotis blue butterfly <i>Lycaeides argyrognomon lotis</i>	E	–
Shasta crayfish <i>Pacifastacus fortis</i>	E	E
Mount Hermon June beetle <i>Polyphylla barbata</i>	E	–
Behren’s silverspot butterfly <i>Speyeria zerene behrensii</i>	E	–
Zayante band-winged grasshopper <i>Trimerotropis infantilis</i>	E	–
Amphibians		
California tiger salamander (Central California Distinct Population Segment) <i>Ambystoma californiense</i>	T	
California tiger salamander (Santa Barbara County Distinct Population Segment) <i>Ambystoma californiense</i>	E	
Santa Cruz long-toed salamander <i>Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum</i>	E	E; FP
Tehachapi slender salamander <i>Batrachoseps stebbinsi</i>	–	T
Arroyo toad <i>Bufo californicus</i>	E	SSC

Species	Status ¹	
	Federal	State
Shasta salamander <i>Hydromantes shastae</i>	–	T
California red-legged frog <i>Rana aurora draytonii</i>	T	SSC
Foothill yellow-legged frog <i>Rana boylei</i>	–	SSC
Mountain yellow-legged frog <i>Rana muscosa</i>	C	SSC
Southern torrent salamander <i>Rhyacotriton variegatus</i>	–	SSC
Reptiles		
Western pond turtle <i>Clemmys</i> < <i>Actinemys</i> > <i>marmorata</i>	–	SSC
Blunt-nosed leopard lizard <i>Gambelia silus</i>	E	E; FP
Giant garter snake <i>Thamnophis gigas</i>	T	T
Birds		
Tricolored blackbird <i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	BBC	SSC 1 st priority
Golden eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	BCC	FP, SSC
Western burrowing owl <i>Athene cunicularia</i>	BCC	SSC 1 st priority
Marbled murrelet <i>Brachyramphus marmoratus</i>	T	E
Swainson's hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	BCC	T
Western snowy plover (Pacific Coast Population) <i>Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus</i>	T	SSC
Western yellow-billed cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	C; BCC	T
Willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii</i>	–	E
Southwestern willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	E	E
American peregrine falcon <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	Delisted; BCC	E; FP
Bald eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Delisted	E; FP

Species	Status ¹	
	Federal	State
California Black rail <i>Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus</i>	BCC	T; FP
California brown pelican <i>Pelecanus occidentalis californicus</i>	E	E
Purple martin <i>Progne subis</i>	–	SSC 1 st priority
California clapper rail <i>Rallus longirostris obsoletus</i>	E	E; FP
Great gray owl <i>Strix nebulosa</i>	–	E
Northern spotted owl <i>Strix occidentalis caurina</i>	T	–
Least Bell's vireo <i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	E	E
Mammals		
San Joaquin antelope ground squirrel <i>Ammospermophilus nelsoni</i>	–	T
Point Arena mountain beaver <i>Aplodontia rufa nigra</i>	E	SSC
Giant kangaroo rat <i>Dipodomys ingens</i>	E	E
Fisher (West Coast Distinct Population Segment) <i>Martes pennanti</i>	C	SSC
San Joaquin kit fox <i>Vulpes macrotis mutica</i>	E	T
Total: 49		

Notes:

¹ Status

Federal

E = listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

T = listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act.

FPD = federally proposed for delisting.

C = species is currently a candidate for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act.

BCC = birds of conservation concern. Represent highest conservation priorities and draw attention to species in need of conservation.

– = no listing.

State

E = listed as endangered under the California Endangered Species Act.

T = listed as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act.

FP = fully protected under the California Fish and Game Code.

SSC = species of special concern in California.

– = no listing.

Sources:

California Department of Fish and Game. 2008a. Special Animals. Available: <<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/SPAnimals.pdf>>. Accessed: February 2008.

California Department of Fish and Game. 2008b. State and Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species. Available: <http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/species/t_e_spp/>. Accessed February 2008.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Endangered Species Lists. Available: <http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/StateListingAndOccurrence.do?state=CA>. Accessed: March 3, 2008.

Table 2. Plant Species Proposed for HCP Coverage

Species	Status ¹		
	Federal	State	CNPS
McDonald's rock-cress <i>Arabis mcdonaldiana</i>	E	E	1B
Hearst's Manzanita <i>Arctostaphylos hookeri</i> ssp. <i>hearstiorum</i>	--	E	1B
Morro Manzanita <i>Arctostaphylos morroensis</i>	T	--	1B
marsh sandwort <i>Arenaria paludicola</i>	E	E	1B
coastal dunes milk-vetch <i>Astragalus tener</i> var. <i>titi</i>	E	E	1B
San Benito evening-primrose <i>Camissonia benitensis</i>	T	--	1B
California jewelflower <i>Caulanthus californicus</i>	E	E	1B
Hearst's ceanothus <i>Ceanothus hearstiorum</i>	--	R	1B

Species	Status ¹		
	Federal	State	CNPS
maritime ceanothus <i>Ceanothus maritimus</i>	--	R	1B
purple amole <i>Chlorogalum purpureum</i> (includes both <i>Chlorogalum purpureum</i> var. <i>purpureum</i> and <i>Chlorogalum purpureum</i> var. <i>reductum</i>)	T	R	1B
Howell's spineflower <i>Chorizanthe howellii</i>	E	T	1B
Ben Lomond spineflower <i>Chorizanthe pungens</i> var. <i>hartwegiana</i>	E	--	1B
Monterey spineflower <i>Chorizanthe pungens</i> var. <i>pungens</i>	T	--	1B
Scott's Valley spineflower <i>Chorizanthe robusta</i> var. <i>hartwegii</i>	E	--	1B
robust spineflower <i>Chorizanthe robusta</i> var. <i>robusta</i>	E	--	1B
Chorro Creek bog thistle <i>Cirsium fontinale</i> var. <i>obispoense</i>	E	E	1B
La Graciosa thistle <i>Cirsium loncholepis</i>	E	T	1B
Pismo clarkia <i>Clarkia speciosa</i> ssp. <i>immaculata</i>	E	R	1B
salt marsh bird's-beak <i>Cordylanthus maritimus</i> ssp. <i>maritimus</i>	E	E	1B
palmate bird's-beak <i>Cordylanthus palmatus</i>	E	E	1B
seaside bird's-beak <i>Cordylanthus rigidus</i> ssp. <i>littoralis</i>	--	E	1B
Santa Cruz cypress <i>Cupressus abramsiana</i>	E	E	1B
Gowen cypress <i>Cupressus goveniana</i> ssp. <i>goveniana</i>	T	--	1B
Gaviota tarplant <i>Deinandra increscens</i> ssp. <i>villosa</i>	E	E	1B
Indian Knob mountain balm <i>Eriodictyon altissimum</i>	E	E	1B
Lompoc yerba santa <i>Eriodictyon capitatum</i>	E	R	1B
Butterworth's buckwheat <i>Eriogonum butterworthianum</i>	--	R	1B
Red Mountain (Kelloggs') buckwheat <i>Eriogonum kelloggii</i>	C	E	1B

Species	Status ¹		
	Federal	State	CNPS
Loch Lomond button-celery <i>Eryngium constancei</i>	E	E	1B
Menzies' wallflower <i>Erysimum menziesii</i> (includes both <i>Erysimum menziesii</i> ssp. <i>eurekaense</i> and <i>Erysimum menziesii</i> ssp. <i>yadonii</i>)	E	E	1B
Santa Cruz wallflower <i>Erysimum teretifolium</i>	E	E	1B
Monterey gilia <i>Gilia tenuiflora</i> ssp. <i>arenaria</i>	E	T	1B
Santa Cruz tarplant <i>Holocarpha macradenia</i>	T	E	1B
Burke's goldfields <i>Lasthenia burkei</i>	E	E	1B
Contra Costa goldfields <i>Lasthenia conjugens</i>	E	--	1B
beach layia <i>Layia carnosa</i>	E	E	1B
western lily <i>(Lilium occidentale)</i>	E	E	1B
Nipomo Mesa lupine <i>Lupinus nipomensis</i>	E	E	1B
Tidestrom's (clover) lupine <i>Lupinus tidestromii</i>	E	E	1B
San Joaquin woolly-threads <i>Monolopia congdonii</i>	E	--	1B
few-flowered navarretia <i>Navarretia leucocephala</i> ssp. <i>pauciflora</i>	E	T	1B
many-flowered navarretia <i>Navarretia leucocephala</i> ssp. <i>plieantha</i>	E	E	1B
Lake County stonecrop <i>(Parvisedum leiocarpum)</i>	E	E	1B
Dudley's lousewort <i>Pedicularis dudleyi</i>	--	R	1B
white-rayed pentachaeta <i>Pentachaeta bellidiflora</i>	E	E	1B
Yadon's piperia <i>Piperia yadonii</i>	E	--	1B
San Francisco popcorn-flower <i>Plagiobothrys diffusus</i>	--	E	1B
Santa Lucia mint <i>Pogogyne clareana</i>	--	E	1B

Species	Status ¹		
	Federal	State	CNPS
Scott's Valley polygonum <i>Polygonum hickmanii</i>	E	E	1B
Hickman's cinquefoil <i>Potentilla hickmanii</i>	E	E	1B
Gambel's watercress <i>Rorippa gambellii</i>	E	T	1B
adobe sanicle <i>Sanicula maritima</i>	--	R	1B
Red Mountain stonecrop <i>(Sedum eastwoodiae)</i>	C	--	1B
Cuesta Pass checkerbloom <i>Sidalcea hickmanii</i> ssp. <i>anomala</i>	--	R	1B
Parish's checkerbloom <i>Sidalcea hickmanii</i> ssp. <i>parishii</i>	C	R	1B
California seablite <i>Suaeda californica</i>	E	--	1B
Santa Ynez false lupine <i>Thermopsis macrophylla</i>	--	R	1B
Kneeland Prairie penny-cress <i>(Thlaspi californicum)</i>	E	--	1B
Pacific Grove clover <i>Trifolium polyodon</i>	--	R	1B
Monterey clover <i>Trifolium trichocalyx</i>	E	E	1B
Total: 60			